

# A Letter to Families About Outdoor Play

Dear families,

Playing outdoors is a powerful way to support children's development across all domains, from physical to cognitive. The benefits of being outdoors are well-documented by professional researchers in medicine, education, and psychology, but all you really need to do is ask children, "How about we go outside?"

Your children will spend a great deal of time outdoors during our school year together. We will go outside every day the weather is not dangerous. Some of our outdoor time will be spent engaged in planned learning experiences, but children will also have plenty of unstructured time to run, jump, crawl, climb, and use all of their large muscles—as well as their imaginations!

When you visit our classroom this year, you might get to experience our "outdoor classroom." Meanwhile, there are many things you can do at home to support the learning made possible by going outdoors, including making sure your child comes to school each day dressed comfortably for both indoor and outdoor play.

## What You Can Do at Home

- Talk with your child about the things she enjoys doing outside in general, as well as the specific outdoor activities she is involved in each day at school.
- Try to spend time outdoors with your child every day that weather conditions allow. Look for ways to both play with your child and engage in learning experiences. For example, you can take a picnic to a park, play catch, swing on swings, blow bubbles, take long walks, and explore the natural world with your child. Watch what your child is interested in during your time outdoors.
- When you are headed outdoors, take along a bag or other container so children can collect interesting natural items to take home with them. Examining sticks, leaves, pebbles, and seeds helps children learn about living things and practice collecting and organizing materials.
- Encourage your child's observational and vocabulary skills by pointing out interesting things you see outdoors: "Look at that yellow dandelion growing through the crack in the sidewalk."